




State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Encl5a - Cover Memo
January 14, 2019

Ken Wagner, Ph.D.
Commissioner

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TO: Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
FROM: Ken Wagner, Ph.D., Commissioner 
RE: **Charters Undergoing Renewal – 2018-2019**

Authority

Rhode Island General Law 16-77-5.1(b) designates the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (the Council) as the authorizer for charter schools. In this capacity, the Council is responsible for charter school approval, renewal and revocation. RIDE is delegated with the authority and responsibility to manage a comprehensive system of charter school accountability, review, monitoring, and system management. With the support of RIDE's charter team, the Council plays a fundamental role in maintaining and advancing the quality and accountability of the charter sector.

Background

In 2015, RIDE embarked on a process to revise the existing charter performance framework based on lessons learned over 5 years of implementation and alignment to national best practice. The purpose of the revision was to increase transparency of charter performance review, provide clarity on charter's performance annually, and ensure consistency of decisions that prioritize the school's academic performance. This is the second cycle of implementing the [updated charter performance framework](#) (2017 was the first implementation year). The academic indicator aligns to RIDE's statewide school accountability system.

System Overview

- Four overall indicators that annually evaluate each charter school's performance
 - Primary Indicator: Academic Performance is aligned to the statewide school accountability and comprised of the School Performance indicator and if needed, School Comparison. To meet expectations on School Performance a school must be at the 3-star level.
 - If not, the analysis for the school comparison sub-indicator is completed including sending district comparison and a deeper look at two academic measures in the star rating – EL Progress and overall Student Growth.
 - Sustainability: Financial, Organizational and Compliance
- Each indicator contains multiple performance criteria that determine an annual rating for that indicator (Exceeds, Meets, Approaches, Does Not Meet).
- Detailed annual reports for all charter schools identify ratings for individual criteria and overall indicators.
- Schools undergoing renewal are organized into initial renewal tiers, based on annual performance data, that differentiate the renewal process. The tier is updated based on the most recent performance results and helps inform the recommendation.

Steps to the Renewal Process

RIDE has conducted an in-depth review of the charter's performance over the course of its term and conducted a differentiated site visit, based on each school's performance, resulting in the enclosed recommendations.

- 1) All charters received ratings for academic, organizational, and financial performance on an annual basis. This information was reported to the Council, including the initial renewal tiers for schools in the renewal cycle, via the "Charter Annual Performance Review and Renewal Preview." (March 2018)

- 2) Charters were briefed on their performance to date, completed document submission to prepare for the site visit. (January – March 2018)
- 3) RIDE conducted renewal review of charter, including lottery monitoring and differentiated site visit, based on the renewal tier (March – May 2018)
- 4) RIDE provided draft renewal reports to charter leaders based on site visits and document review, while 2017-18 academic results (e.g. assessment results and star ratings) were pending. Charters had the opportunity to provide factual corrections to the report content (July – September 2018)
- 5) Council members attended open houses hosted by charters and received charter overviews and current performance ratings to prepare for visits (September – October 2018)
- 6) Charter performance indicators and final tier designations were updated based on results of the new statewide school accountability star ratings (November – December 2018)
- 7) RIDE used all information gathered from renewal process and the results of the final performance ratings to inform a renewal recommendation. (December 2018)
- 8) RIDE shared draft recommendations with each charter and charters provided a response to the renewal recommendation (December 2018 – January 2019)
- 9) Council receives all information from the process and makes charter renewal decisions (January 2019)

Council – Charter Engagement Overview

As part of the updated process, Council members are provided with opportunities to engage directly with charter schools regarding authorization decisions related to renewal, beyond the regular public comment opportunity. These include; optional open house visits by Council members to each school undergoing renewal, charters' written responses to the renewal recommendation as part of the Council packet, and Council members asking clarifying questions directly to representatives from the charter school during the Council meeting.

After Council discussion of the recommendation and asking questions to RIDE, the Council may opt to ask questions directly to two representatives of the charter, who will be available at the meeting. In addition, Council members may request additional information between a working meeting and a voting meeting to both RIDE and the Charter. RIDE will consolidate all requested information and provide it to the Council in a timely manner in advance of the next meeting.

Renewal Documentation: The Council will receive and review for each charter:

- Renewal Recommendation
- Renewal Report
- School Response to Renewal Report and Recommendation
- All Annual Performance Reports for the Charter